



City of Charleston Firefighter Trainee Recruitment Guide

Information to assist the prospective Charleston Firefighter Trainee applicant



CHARLESTON FIRE DEPARTMENT

CHARLESTON, SOUTH CAROLINA

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About Our City

The City of Charleston is a progressive and energetic city. Our goal is to provide our residents with the best service a city can provide and our visitors with the best vacation or business trip that a city can provide. Charleston is a special and unique city. The combination of our unequalled beauty, warm hospitality, and unique public spaces provide a wonderful backdrop for residents and visitors. Through careful conservation, creative and innovative financing, and meticulous planning, Charleston is a city that celebrates a rich history. Charleston was the first city in the country to enact a preservation ordinance. We have an active and ongoing interest in the protection and restoration of our buildings, which tell the story of our past. Keeping an eye to the future, we have set goals that make the livability and quality of life in Charleston the best in the nation. We work diligently to keep our city the best place in the country to work, live, and play.



About Our Department

The Charleston Fire Department (CFD) consists of 20 fire companies located throughout the

peninsular City and incorporated areas of West Ashley, James Island, John's Island, and Daniel Island/ Cainhoy. CFD operates 16 fire engine companies and four ladder companies, and provides service to more than 120,000 citizens across a service area totaling approximately 109 square miles.

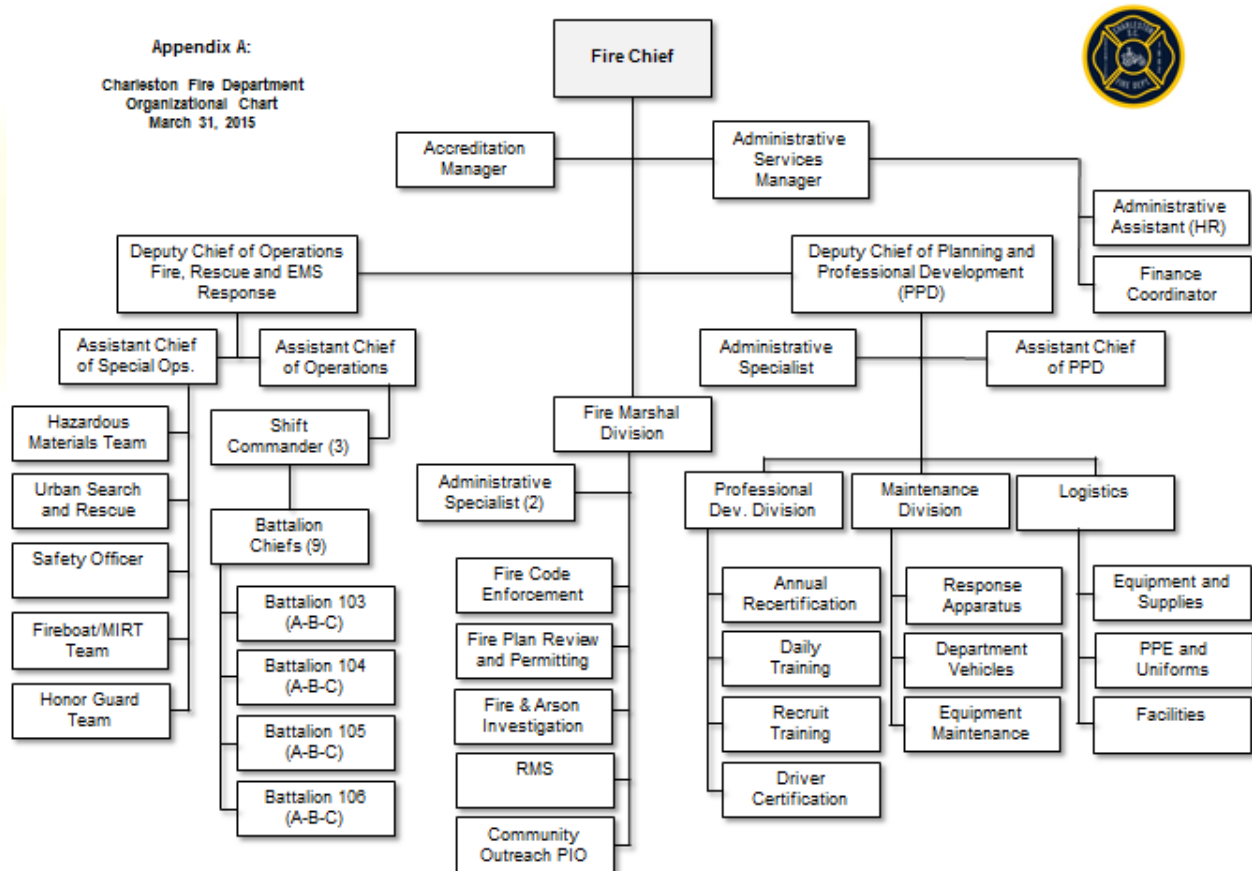


Department Structure

The fire chief and two deputy chiefs supervise three bureaus.

Operations Division

The Operations Bureau is led by a deputy chief of operations and two assistant chiefs. One assistant chief provides day-to-day coordination of the three shifts and the second assistant chief oversees the Special Operations Section. A third assistant chief is assigned as the quality control officer for incident reporting. Field operations are broken down into four geographic battalions. The battalions are supervised by 12 battalion chiefs (four per shift) who command three shifts of captains, engineers, assistant engineers, and firefighters. Personnel are assigned to one of three working shifts. The duty shift is 24 hours on and 48 hours off. The primary focus during the working shift is to protect the lives and property of the citizens and visitors of Charleston. This focus is maintained through a commitment to the Health, Wellness and Safety of our Operations Division personnel.



Mission Statement

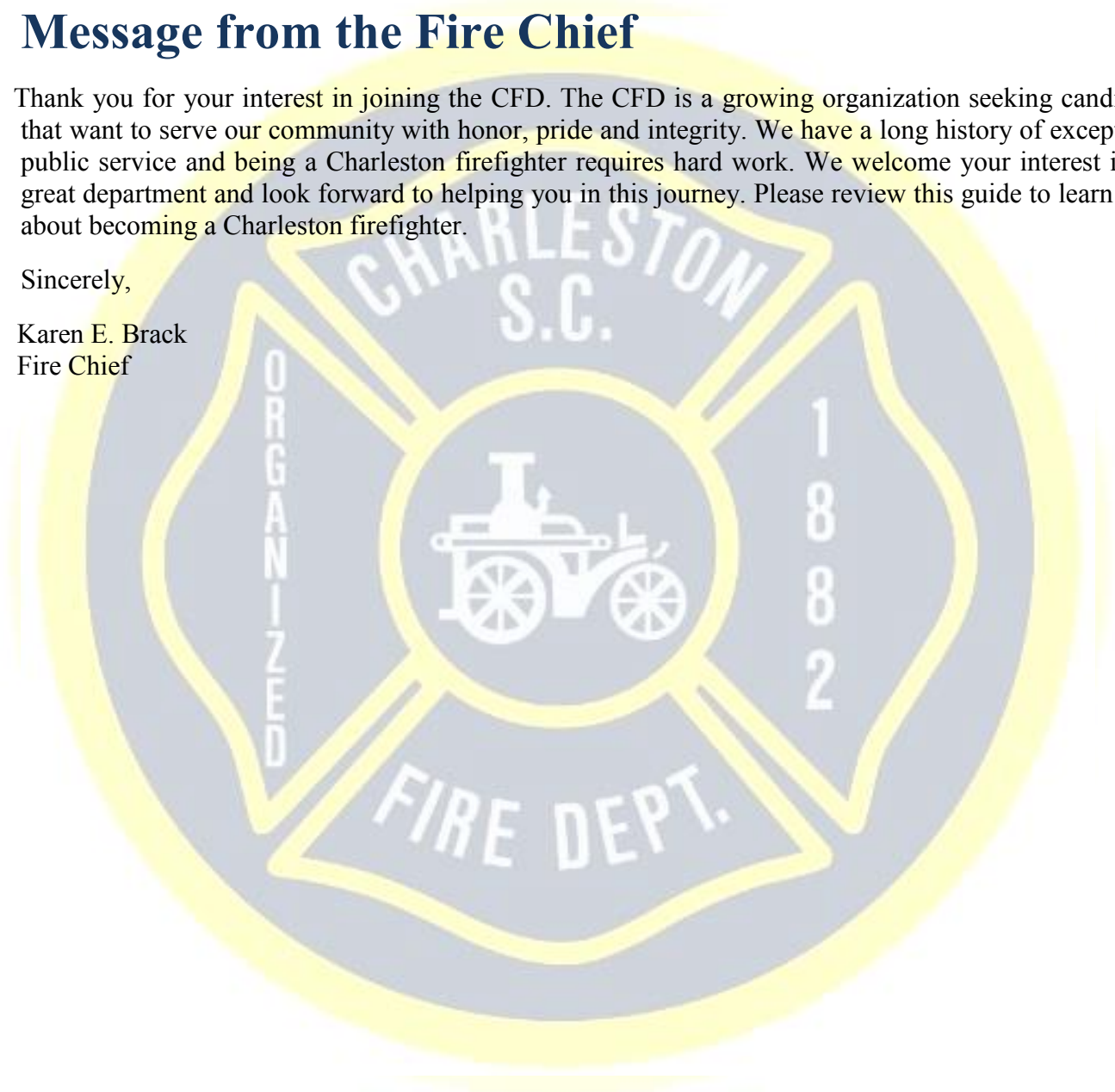
The purpose of the CFD is to assure a safe community through prevention and the robust delivery of professional fire/rescue services. Our firefighters are our most precious resource - we will never put their lives in danger or unnecessary risk when human life is not in immediate peril.

Message from the Fire Chief

Thank you for your interest in joining the CFD. The CFD is a growing organization seeking candidates that want to serve our community with honor, pride and integrity. We have a long history of exceptional public service and being a Charleston firefighter requires hard work. We welcome your interest in our great department and look forward to helping you in this journey. Please review this guide to learn more about becoming a Charleston firefighter.

Sincerely,

Karen E. Brack
Fire Chief



Position Information

Charleston Firefighters

The firefighter trainee is an entry level fire suppression, prevention, and emergency response position for the CFD. This classification exists solely for those who are completing their initial fire department training in the CFD recruit academy. Upon completion of the required training, personnel will progress into the position of a probationary firefighter.



Under close supervision in a training capacity, the firefighter trainee will receive **instruction in:**

- Response to emergency calls for fire, medical, and other emergency situations.
- Operating equipment and related apparatus under the direction of an instructor.
- Basic skills to perform all activities necessary to assist in the suppression of fires including advancing lines, directing water and chemicals, climbing ladders, and creating openings for ventilation or entrance.
- Responding to medical emergencies, assessing emergency medical problems, and performing emergency medical treatment in the absence of paramedics.
- Salvage work and site clean-up.
- Search and rescue for trapped or injured persons from motor vehicle accidents and other situations involving threat to human life.
- Operating specialized fire vehicles/equipment (fire engines, ladder trucks, pumps, tenders, etc.).
- Cleaning and maintaining station facilities, grounds, equipment, and apparatus to ensure a constant state of readiness for emergency calls.
- Pre-fire planning of buildings for fire hazards, including the location of exits and fire protection devices.
- A variety of fire prevention operations, activities, and programs including training, fire investigations, and equipment operation and maintenance.
- Activities and operations in response to natural or man-made disasters, major accidents, incidents involving hazardous materials, and other emergency situations.
- Physical fitness techniques included in a physical fitness program.
- Establishing, maintaining, and fostering a positive attitude toward occupational safety and health.

- Ensuring that all operations are performed with the utmost regard for the safety and health of self, coworkers, and the public.

Requirements: High school diploma or GED with an Associate's Degree preferred and valid state issued driver's license. EMT-Basic preferred, with a minimum of one (1) year left on certification. Must be at least 18 years of age at time of application.

Compensation

While in recruit academy, firefighter trainees are paid an hourly rate. This rate will be included in the hiring announcement on our employment page at the time of advertisement. Upon completion of recruit academy, trainees are classified as firefighters and are compensated based upon the CFD pay plan.

Benefits

The City of Charleston is proud to offer a competitive benefits package to supplement our employees' total compensation package. Some of these benefits include:

- ***Flexible Spending Accounts*** - Employees have the benefit of saving monies for dependent care and/or medical care at an amount designated by the employee each year. These savings are deducted from the employees' pay prior to the calculation of taxes which results in additional savings for the employee.
- ***Group Dental Insurance*** - The City's dental plan helps lay the foundation for a lifetime of good dental habits. It is a traditional plan that gives enrollees the freedom to see any dentist.
- ***Group Health Insurance*** - The City offers a comprehensive health insurance plan with generous employer contributions. Employees are eligible on the first day of the month following their date of hire. Discounted non-tobacco user premiums are also available.
- ***Optional Deferred Compensation Plan*** - An employee, if they so choose, may also make tax-deferred contributions to this plan in order to provide themselves with additional retirement income.
- ***Optional Life Insurance And Disability Plans*** - Employees may purchase supplemental term life policies or short-term disability. Long-term disability is paid at 100% by the City.
- ***Paid Sick Leave*** - Employees accrue sick time which provides paid leave for potential illnesses.
- ***Retirement Plan*** -The City is a member of the South Carolina Retirement System.
- ***Tuition Reimbursement*** -To help employees continue their education.
- ***Vacation Leave*** - Based on the employee's years of service.
- ***Wellness Programs***- The City of Charleston has implemented an intensive wellness program to assist employees in maintaining healthy, active lifestyles. These include gym reimbursement, fitness and exercise classes, smoking cessation programs, and much more.

The CFD is proud to offer the following additional resources to employees:

- ***Certified VA approved School (recruit academy)***-The CFD recruit academy is recognized as a certified school through the Department of Veterans of Affairs (VA).
- ***Veteran On-the-Job Training*** – The CFD is certified through the State Approving Agency and approved by the VA as a recognized on-the-job training program.

Career Advancement

CFD firefighters have the opportunity for career advancement through a competitive promotional process. Candidates must meet the following time in grade (TIG) and time in service (TIS) requirements to be eligible to compete for the following positions:

Engineer:

TIG - At least 1 year of consecutive satisfactory service as a full-time paid assistant engineer. Assistant Engineer is a promotional position in the Charleston Fire Department.

TIS – At least 3 years of consecutive service with the Charleston Fire Department.

Captain:

TIG - At least 4 years of consecutive satisfactory service as an engineer.

TIS – At least 7 years of consecutive service with the Charleston Fire Department.

Battalion Chief:

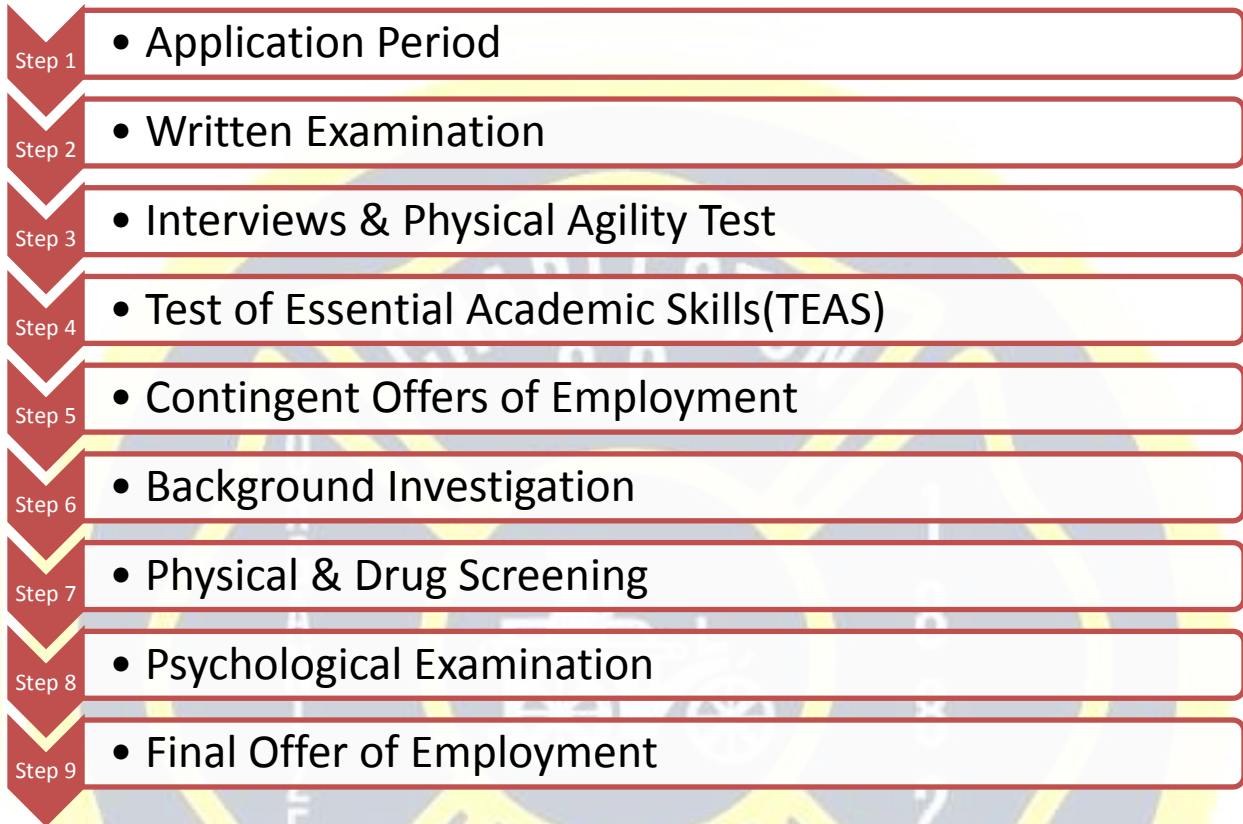
TIG - At least 4 years of consecutive satisfactory service as a fire captain.

TIS – At least 11 years of consecutive service with the Charleston Fire Department.

Recruitment & Selection



The selection process step by step:



The Application Process

Applications for the position of firefighter trainee are only accepted when the position is advertised on our employment page. www.charleston-sc.gov/employment
Please visit the City's employment page to apply online.

Interest Card: To sign-up to be notified when the fire department is hiring please visit our employment page and select **"Notify Me"** at the top of the page. This option will allow you to sign-up for employment notifications via e-mail. All applications must be received by the human resources department no later than 5pm on the closing date listed on the announcement. Applicants are responsible for updating their e-mail/contact information with human resources. Applicants should check their spam/junk folder for e-mails from the City that may be misrouted.

The Written Examination

Applicants who apply by the closing date will be provided with instructions for online test registration via e-mail after the application period closes. The written exam is a multiple choice test that is designed to assess your knowledge, skills, and abilities to be a Firefighter Trainee. These scores will be used to determine the interview pool for the hiring process. A study guide is available for this test.

Interview and the Physical Agility Test

Human Resources will notify applicants via e-mail to inform them as to whether or not they are advancing to the interview process and physical agility test. Applicants advancing will be notified via e-mail of their participation dates. The physical agility test and oral interviews will typically occur over a two-day period in the interest of time and to reduce multiple trips. For example, applicants will be scheduled for the physical agility test on the first day and their interview on the second day. Applicants must successfully complete the physical agility test to participate in the oral interview process.

Physical Agility Test

In the physical agility test, candidates are asked to perform eleven tasks similar to those performed by firefighters on the job. Candidates must complete the test within the time frame pre-determined by the CFD. The test is pass or fail. Applicants must receive medical clearance from a physician prior to performing the physical agility test. Human Resources will provide the City's medical clearance form to those participating in the physical agility test.

Events in the Physical Agility Test

Event 1: Dry Hose Deployment

Candidate advances pre-connected 1.75 inch dry hose line for 150 feet. Each 50 foot section weighs 21 pounds, for a total of 63 pounds of dry weight. This event simulates extending a dry offensive hose line from an apparatus to a fire scene for firefighting operations.

Event 2: Charged Hose Deployment

Candidate advances pre-connected 1.75 inch charged hose line for 70 feet. This event simulates extending a charged offensive hose line to the seat of a fire for firefighting operations.

Event 3: Halyard Raise

Candidate raises and lowers the fly section of a 24 foot aluminum extension ladder with a halyard. The pull resistance of the ladder is approximately 26 pounds. This event simulates raising and lowering the fly of a 24 foot aluminum extension ladder in order to access higher floors for rescue, ventilation, and other firefighting operations.

Event 4: Roof Walk

Candidate ascends and descends a 10 foot distance walking/crawling on the rungs of a 14 foot roof ladder while carrying a simulated 25 pound chain saw. This event simulates walking on a roof ladder with the appropriate equipment in order to perform ventilation operations.

Event 5: Attic Crawl

Candidate crawls a distance of 20 feet across a simulated attic area while carrying a simulated flashlight in his/her hands. This event simulates walking/crawling on joists in an attic to search for the extension of a fire.

Event 6: Roof Ventilation

Candidate stands on a pitched rooftop and strikes the roof 30 times with a 10 pound sledge hammer. This event simulates making a ventilation opening in a roof with an axe or sledgehammer in order to ventilate a fire.

Event 7: Victim Removal

Candidate carries or drags a 165 pound dummy for 26 feet. This event simulates removing an injured or unconscious victim from a hazardous area.

Event 8: Ladder Removal/Carry

Candidate removes a 24 foot aluminum extension ladder from mounted hooks, carries the ladder 54 feet around a diamond shaped course, and replaces the ladder to the mounted hooks. The

weight of the ladder is 89 pounds. This event simulates removing an extension ladder from an apparatus, carrying it to the site of use, and replacing it to the apparatus.

Events 9 and 10: Stair Climb with Hose, Crawling Search

Candidate ascends stairs to the fourth floor with a 42 pound hose bundle that they place on their shoulder. This event simulates climbing stairs with a hose bundle in order to fight fires in multiple-story buildings.

Candidate sets the hose bundle down on the fourth floor and completes Event 10: Crawling Search, crawling for a distance of 46 feet. This event simulates crawling while conducting search and rescue or attic operations in a burning structure.

Candidate then places the hose bundle back on their shoulder and descends the stairs to the ground floor where they place the hose bundle in the designated area.

Event 11: Stair Climb with Equipment/Hose Hoist

Candidate picks up two air cylinders (with a shoulder strap), places air cylinders over the shoulder, and returns up the stairs to the third floor. On the third floor the candidate places the air bottles on the floor and hoists a 100-foot section of an extended hose line up and over the balcony rail. The candidate then picks up the air cylinders and returns to the ground floor to end the test. This event simulates hoisting an extended hose line and carrying equipment in a multiple story building to facilitate firefighting operations.

TEAS (Test of Essential Academic Skills)

Based upon hiring needs, the City will determine the number of hires for Recruit Academy. Applicants will be ranked based upon their oral interview scores. The City will determine the number of applicants to advance to the TEAS. The TEAS measures reading comprehension and math skills. The minimal scores for this test will be announced through correspondence from Human Resources to the applicants.

The TEAS is required for enrollment into Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) courses in South Carolina. EMT is part of the City's Firefighter Recruit Academy. Applicants already certified as an EMT Basic National Registry, or higher (National Registry Intermediate or Paramedic), are not required to take the TEAS provided that they have at least one year remaining on the National Registry card as of the date of hire.

The City's Fire Department administers the TEAS. Study guides for the TEAS are available online at the applicant's expense. Based on the hiring needs of the City, the scoring of the oral interviews and testing, candidates may then be extended a contingent offer of employment. The City may designate applicants as alternates (based upon oral interview scores) provided that they meet the score requirements for the TEAS or possess EMT certification as stated above. Applicants will be informed if they are designated as an alternate.

Contingent Offers of Employment

The top applicants (number determined by hiring needs of the City) will be extended a contingent offer of employment.

The offers will be contingent, but not solely limited to satisfactory returns on: reference checks, a criminal background check, a motor vehicle record check, a medical physical, drug screening, and a psychological examination.

Background Investigation

The nature of this position sometimes requires the employee to be in a citizen's home or vehicle, or to provide services to children or vulnerable adults. Accordingly, all available background information, including but not limited to criminal and driving records are reviewed. An applicant cannot have been convicted of any offense that denies licensure as an emergency medical technician (EMT), have a criminal background or poor driving record.

In addition, the "South Carolina Firefighters Employment and Registration Act" requires a criminal records check prior to employment of a paid or volunteer firefighter and includes offenses that are disqualifiers. Please visit <http://www.scstatehouse.gov/code/t40c080.php> for more information.

Other disqualifications for employment include but are not limited to: a conviction of driving under the influence of drugs or alcohol within the last 5 years of your application date or multiple traffic offenses.

Physical and Drug Screening

Candidates will be required to pass a medical assessment and drug test. Candidates will be provided with details regarding these screenings in e-mail correspondence. All testing is held in Charleston.

Psychological Examination

Candidates will be required to pass a psychological assessment to be held in Charleston. Candidates will be provided with details regarding this screening in e-mail correspondence.

Final Offer of Employment

Candidates who successfully complete all pre-employment requirements will begin the CFD's six month recruit academy.

What to Expect in the Recruit Academy

A Message from the Training Division

Once offered a position, all candidates must successfully complete our in-house, paid recruit academy. Upon successful completion of the academy, firefighter trainees are assigned to a company to complete their probationary year.

The recruit academy at the CFD is physically and mentally challenging to develop a quality firefighter that has confidence in the firefighter/EMT skill set. Candidates will be taught the necessary job related knowledge and skills to ensure they begin their careers with a strong foundation. This intense education process is combined with a comprehensive physical fitness program to prepare candidates for the physical aspects of the profession.

The program includes classroom instruction and hands on training in firefighting techniques, search and rescue, vehicle extrication, emergency medical services, firefighter survival, and the use of various firefighting tools and equipment. The CFD recruit academy is known as a rigorous, hands-on, drill-intensive training program that focuses on “TEAM” and “Pride and Ownership”. Recruits are evaluated weekly and must successfully complete all training elements in order to graduate.

Recruit candidates that successfully complete the CFD’s recruit academy will earn certification in the following disciplines:

Firefighter I & II

Flammable/Combustible Liquids Firefighting

Building Construction

Emergency Vehicle Operations

Search and Rescue

Rapid Intervention Crew

Automobile Extrication

Hazardous Materials

National Registered Emergency Medical Technician

NIMS – ICS

Incident Safety Officer

Get Ready

Message from David Griffin, PhD, Captain/Recruit Coordinator:

If you do not currently participate in any type of functional workout routine, then you are already behind. However, there is still time to successfully prepare before the beginning of the recruit academy. During the academy, the physical workout component is broken down into three to four days of training per week. To prepare, functional exercises such as push-ups, pull-ups, squats, burpees, etc. are important. We will also perform Olympic movements to increase functional strength. All of the aforementioned exercises, combined with proper rest and nutrition, will prepare your body for the more intense work that will be completed during the academy.

The CFD recruit academy fitness program uses Crossfit principles in our training. Instructors are certified ACE peer fitness trainers. The Crossfit methodology is used as research has shown it is effective in increasing the work capacity of military personnel, police officers, and firefighters. Also, we focus a great deal on core and leg strength due to the fact that you will be wearing over 70 pounds of gear for upwards of eight hours a day during the academy. More functional exercises and information can be found at www.crossfit.com

Eating Right

Nutrition and hydration are also major components when preparing for the academy. It is imperative that you hydrate the night before and throughout the day as it is difficult to rehydrate once you get behind. Furthermore, a balanced nutrition plan with the emphasis on complex carbohydrates, lean proteins, and sufficient fruits and vegetables is suggested as this will ensure your body recovers correctly during the training process. Candidates should avoid caffeine drinks, simple sugars, etc. Also, energy supplements of all types are strictly prohibited during the recruit academy.

For more information, visit The Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics website at <http://www.eatright.org>.

During the first week, candidates will receive a presentation on “The Industrial Athlete,” which will explain in depth what to expect physically and mentally and how to prepare every day.

The recruit academy at the CFD is not for the faint at heart. We are training you with the most innovative and challenging practices in the national fire service to ensure that you can perform your job effectively.

The citizens of this great city expect to be provided with the best service possible from the most educated and physically and mentally prepared firefighters in the country. Are you ready to give all you have over the next six months to be the best? It takes courage and mental toughness, but in the end, you will be rewarded with a great career in one of the most historic fire departments in the country.

Good luck in your preparation.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the job of a Firefighter really like?

Firefighting involves extremely hard, skilled, physical work. Firefighters must be able to think quickly and operate effectively in high-pressure emergency situations. Continuous training and education is required throughout their careers to keep them up-to-date on the newest technologies and latest fire suppression and rescue methods. Training in the fire service encompasses many subjects, such as building construction, emergency medical procedures, hazardous materials, technical rescue, fire prevention, public education, and community relations. Firefighters must have strong social skills, and the ability to think and communicate clearly in very stressful situations.

How much does the firefighting gear weigh?

Firefighters must carry an array of specialized tools and equipment that can weigh over 70 lbs., plus the breathing apparatus that weighs 40 lbs.

What if I have a police record?

All firefighter applicants go through a police background check before being hired. Many considerations will factor into the potential for elimination, including the crimes committed, when they occurred, your age when the crimes occurred, and the relationship between the crimes committed and the job responsibilities of a firefighter.

What if I'm already a firefighter with another department?

All applicants will be required to complete the entire application process, including all tests and successfully complete the requirements of the CFD recruit academy.

How long is the Recruit Academy?

The recruit academy is approximately six months long.

Can the written exam be taken at another time?

No. All applicants must take the exam on the date they are scheduled.

I don't live in the City of Charleston, can I still apply?

Yes. The City of Charleston does not have residential requirements for employees.

Do I need to be a certified firefighter or paramedic at the time of application?

No.

What is the minimum age for applicants?

You must be 18 years of age by the date of application.

What is the maximum age for applicants?

There is no maximum age limit for application.

Do I have to be a high school graduate?

Yes, you must have a high school diploma or GED.

Will I need my Military Discharge Form (DD214) when I turn in my application?

Yes.

How many people will be hired from this application period?

The number of people hired varies from year to year, depending on many factors, including the number of employees retiring and the number of new stations and units placed into service.

